

VZCZCXRO2038
OO RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHDBU RUEHLH RUEHPW
DE RUEHEK #1424/01 3371233
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 031233Z DEC 07
FM AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0421
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2345
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0767
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2749
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2133
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BISHKEK 001424

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/03/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [KG](#)

SUBJECT: KYRGYZ OFFICIALS CALL IN INTERNATIONAL REPS FOR
ELECTION BRIEFING

REF: BISHKEK 1402

BISHKEK 00001424 001.2 OF 003

Classified By: CDA Lee Litzenberger, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Senior Kyrgyz administration officials called a meeting November 30 with some of the diplomatic and donor community to discuss the upcoming parliamentary elections. Attending the meeting were representatives from the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the International Republican Institute (IRI), IFES, the European Commission, UNDO, OSCE, and the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission. Charge attended on behalf of the embassy. The international representatives noted concerns about the conduct of the campaign and the election code, including the high thresholds parties must cross to enter parliament. Presidential foreign policy advisor Ryskulov said that the high thresholds were necessary to avoid clan and regional divisions in the country. Presidential Chief of Staff Sadyrkulov said that administrative resources would not be used to support the pro-presidential Ak Jol party, and he asked that the international community not "pre-judge" the elections. They pledged to be available to meet anytime during the campaign if the international community had concerns. End Summary.

Invitation to Discuss Elections

¶2. (C) Presidential Chief of Staff Medet Sadyrkulov, foreign policy advisor Islan Ryskulov, and presidential legal department head Bektur Zulpiyev called a meeting November 30 to discuss the upcoming parliamentary elections with selected members of the international community. Invited to the meeting were representatives from the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the International Republican Institute (IRI), IFES, the European Commission, UNDO, OSCE, and the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission. Charge attended on behalf of the embassy. While there had been some initial concern that the purpose of the meeting would be to lecture

the international community on how to behave during the campaign, the meeting turned out to be a generally positive initiative to discuss concerns and ask for objectivity in assessing the process.

13. (C) Ryskulov opened the meeting by noting that many groups around the table had made assessments of the October 21 constitutional referendum, and he acknowledged that these assessments presented "differing views" on the conduct of the polling. Ryskulov said that with parliamentary elections in the offing, President Bakiyev had declared his commitment to democracy and open markets. He then asked for each organization present to offer its assessments of the current political situation.

Assessments of the Campaign So Far

14. (C) The international representatives raised a number of concerns about the high thresholds, the election code, and the conduct of the campaign. OSCE Bishkek office head Ambassador Mueller said that the 0.5% regional threshold (see reftel) could leave many voters unrepresented in parliament. He also complained that state television (KTR) had refused to agree to live debates; instead, it would tape the debates and broadcast them later. NDI said that it was "running into difficulties" in organizing debates for television. IFES pointed out that because the elections were called on short notice, the normal preparation deadlines had been cut by one-third; in addition, the new election code was vague and needed clarification in some key areas. While UNDP was not playing a role in these elections, the UNDP representative said that the 0.5% threshold could disenfranchise a large numbers of voters. The European Commission representative reminded that their bilateral partnership agreement committed

BISHKEK 00001424 002.2 OF 003

Kyrgyzstan to respect international norms for elections, and further warned that the 0.5% threshold could lead to civil unrest if large numbers of voters felt disenfranchised.

15. (C) Head of the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Nikolai Vulchanov thanked the Kyrgyz government for inviting observers, and then gave a detailed listing of concerns, including the election code's prohibition on foreign observers commenting prior to election day, that free air time had not begun yet on KTR, and that voter lists were not posted at some precincts as required by the election code. He said that basing the thresholds (5% nationwide and 0.5% in each oblast) on the number of registered voters was unprecedented; in other systems, the threshold was calculated as a percentage of votes cast. Vulchanov said that the 0.5% regional threshold would have a disproportionate impact, and he regretted a court decision upholding the CEC's interpretation of the threshold (reftel). Vulchanov said that the electoral system should balance the desire for consolidation of political parties with the need for pluralism in the parliament.

16. (C) Charge said that the U.S. viewed the elections as an opportunity to move forward with democracy; those around the table demonstrated the strong interest among the international community in supporting free and fair elections. He said that the 0.5% threshold, as interpreted by the CEC, was a concern, and the government should review that decision. After sharing reports that government, hospital, and university staff were being pressured to join the pro-presidential Ak Jol party and to hold meetings to pressure their staffs to join, Charge challenged the government to take the lead in ensuring that administrative resources would not be unfairly used to support Ak Jol.

"Don't Pre-judge the Elections"

17. (C) Ryskulov responded by saying the country needed

political stability to enable the economy to grow; he said GDP was increasing and claimed there would be a budget surplus this year. Ryskulov acknowledged that the 0.5% regional threshold was unusual, but said it was understandable in the circumstances of Kyrgyzstan as a way to avoid clan and geographic divisions. He said it would help avoid separatism. Zulpiyev said that the legal challenge to the CEC's interpretation of the 0.5% threshold was being appealed, and he asked that the international observers wait for a final decision before passing judgment. Zulpiyev also gave a legalistic explanation of how Constitutional Court Chair Cholpon Bayekova could be "suspended from fulfilling her duties" by the president, rather than resign her post as required by law, in order to stand for parliament at the top of the Ak Jol list.

18. (C) Responding to a question from Charge, Sadyrkulov said he had met with regional officials and instructed them not to use admin resources to support the Ak Jol party. He said that the blatant use of administrative resources would only alienate voters, and their polls already confirmed that Ak Jol had strong support. He said that Ak Jol had complained that other parties were violating the rules by bribing voters. He said that the administration had acted with restraint, not responding to the "very aggressive behavior of Asaba (party) in Talas," nor taking action regarding some political banners that include religious themes. He said the administration was doing everything it could to ensure there would not be problems after the elections, and he claimed that the administration wanted opposition representation in parliament.

19. (C) Sadyrkulov described the upcoming election as just a "first step" in a process that will completely change the

BISHKEK 00001424 003.2 OF 003

political situation, and he asked that the international community be patient, maintain objectivity, and look for the positive in this evolution. "I know you assume there will be violations. I am asking for your understanding that we are doing this for the first time," he said. He closed by saying they were ready to meet with the international community at anytime during the campaign if there were concerns.

Comment

10. (C) The fact that senior administration officials were willing to hold such a meeting and listen to the concerns of the international observers can be seen as a positive step. Similarly, the offer to meet during the campaign if there are additional concerns is a positive development. However, the senior administration officials said little to change the impressions that the electoral thresholds, as interpreted by the CEC, present a barrier to forming a parliament with democratic representation, or that administrative resources are being used to support Ak Jol in the campaign.
LITZENBERGER